

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
October 28, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Deborah A.S. Hoag, Department of Public Works

Others present:

Christopher S. Pecora, PE/PLS, Van Cleef Engineering Associates LLC
Domenico Brutto, Mimmo's Restaurant & Pizzeria
Matthew J. Mack, Ludgate Engineering Corporation
Glenn S. Worgan, HAR Associates LP
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the October meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the October 28th agenda, as presented. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the October agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Mimmo's Restaurant Additions – final annexation and land development plan [0:00.32]

Mr. Pecora introduced himself, referred to the previous presentations, and the latest staff reviews. He thought the issues limited to some 'administrative' work, following the receipt of the highway-occupancy permit earlier that day. Mr. Miller added that the zoning permit had also just been issued, and agreed with the characterization of the plan's status. He asked if there were any specific issues with the remaining comments from the Planning Office, Public Works Department or the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Mr. Pecora said not, intending to provide some additional notes. He offered a draft operation and maintenance agreement and fee for the stormwater facilities. Ms. Hoag indicated the Public Works Department's satisfaction with the latest progress. Mr. Miller then recommended a conditional approval. Mr. Bealer suggested the record sets could be endorsed ahead of the next regular meeting, if the revisions are deemed satisfactory. Mr. Pecora appreciated the offer, opined that the additions will present an architectural improvement, and presented the latest renderings. Mr. Miller noted the most-recent changes to the landscaping design. Mr. Raffaelli asked if the house, at 15 Prospect Avenue, remained a part of the plan. Mr. Pecora confirmed that it is.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the final plan, conditioned on its final revisions satisfying the terms of the Planning Office and Public Works Department reviews, and that a municipal improvements agreement is finalized. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted 2 to 1 to conditionally approve the 'Mimmo's Restaurant Additions' final plan, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #34-2014

Homes at Riverside – preliminary land development plan [0:08.24]

Mr. Mack referred to the April 22nd presentation, and briefly described the 47-unit residential development. He said they'd since appealed to the Zoning Hearing Board, were granted variances, and have received a permit from the Zoning Administrator. He acknowledged the latest Planning Office review, summarizing all of its comments as 'will comply'. He said they've met with the Berks County Conservation District, describing the majority of the existing site as impervious cover. They have proposed trees, soil amendments and, most recently, an underground infiltration system to address the stormwater management concerns. He said they've shifted the retaining wall, in order to protect the root systems of the existing trees on the neighboring property. He hadn't yet heard anything from the Shade Tree Commission's review, though the landscaping plan was developed based on an approved-species list provided at a July 31st OneStopShop meeting. Mr. Miller noted the more 'ornamental scale', but still thought the spacing insufficient for their anticipated sizes at maturity. Mr. Mack thought they weren't any longer necessary for the stormwater mitigation, but rather an aesthetic benefit. He requested a preliminary-plan approval. He said they're working on the sewage-planning documentation and an erosion and sedimentation control plan, thinking those were the only 'outside' agency approvals required. He felt that most of the existing trees weren't worth saving, and would be better replaced with healthy and more-

appropriately-sized plantings. Asked about some existing concrete benches, Mr. Mack indicated that they would be removed, explaining that the necessary grading will dramatically change the existing appearance and slopes. He said they've secured a zoning permit, though the conditions of the granted variances require some additional review by the Zoning Administrator. Turning to the parking concerns, Mr. Mack said those requirements had been varied, the Hearing Board more concerned in having *too many* spaces, and setting a maximum of two spaces per dwelling unit. He said the spaces will be assigned, and the vehicle limitation a condition of the leases. Asked about the 13-foot depth of some of the apparent spaces, he said the Hearing Board preferred more green space in some areas, whereas others simply provide access to the garages and are not counted toward the total required. Asked if there would be at least one assigned space per unit, he confirmed, and indicated some positioned closer to the community building. Ms. Hoag wondered if the Zoning Administrator had verified the current plan's compliance with the Hearing Board's conditions. Mr. Miller said he wasn't aware of a zoning permit until an image of an October 9th permit had been shown to him on a mobile phone just prior to the start of the meeting. He thought it curious that it hadn't been referenced in the October 13th correspondence from the applicant. Mr. Mack said those revisions were prepared ahead of the Hearing Board's decision. Ms. Hoag reported that the Public Works Department still has some stormwater concerns to resolve, and that their review is 'in process'. Mr. Mack offered to work with the staff, thinking that the original comments didn't involve anything they couldn't address. Ms. Hoag said they didn't necessarily concur with the findings/assumptions made in the stormwater report. Mr. Mack again offered to work through the staff. He said, as they weren't requesting any waivers, there wasn't any reason to revisit the preliminary plan. Turning back to the parking concerns, Mr. Lauter wondered where the visitors would park. Mr. Mack indicated a couple of 'overflow' spaces on-site, and the available on-street parking surrounding it. Asked for a number, he pointed to spaces behind some of the garages, a couple extra spaces adjacent to the community building, and the bordering streets that are currently underutilized. He added that most of the units include a garage, though the handicapped-accessibility requirements of share and width precluded a garage space for some. He said it meets the Hearing Board's conditions. Mr. Miller noted that the Hearing Board had also varied the requirement that spaces counted be accessible without the movement of other vehicles. Asked about the intended use of the proposed community building, Mr. Worgan supposed meetings of tenants and birthday parties as examples. He said it would not be open to the public. Mr. Mack said they had requested a 48th 'equivalent' in their sewage-planning documentation for that building. Mr. Bealer mentioned the entrance gates and truck movements at the corner of Weiser and Robeson Streets, wondering if any changes or special markings were proposed. Mr. Mack said their construction would match the existing topography. He said their connection to the water supply precluded changes, though the on-street parking near the corners will be appropriately restricted with signage. He said he never received the Fire Marshal's turning template, but had included a turning movement plan in the latest set. Mr. Miller said he had briefly discussed the matter with Fire Department officials the day before, characterizing the revised plan as closer to meeting that need, and acknowledging the additional hydrant. He said the dimensions of what still appear to be parking spaces were a concern, in the event cars block the driveway width available to emergency vehicles. Mr. Mack suggested marking the necessary restrictions. Mr. Miller described a formula found in the International Code Council's (ICC) building codes, in addition to the local specifications. Mr. Mack said they could resolve those concerns at the final-plan stage. Mr. Miller clarified that the review comments must be resolved with information on the plan; not delayed until the building-permitting phase. Other utility information, to be determined, was discussed, including the locations of geothermal wells. Ms. Hoag mentioned some on-going confusion regarding the measures of impervious cover, before and following the development, as it relates to the stormwater impact. Mr. Mack noted the addition of an underground detention facility, intending to address the remaining concerns with the final plan. Asked about the detail provided for a proposed retaining wall, Mr. Mack again cited the preliminary status of the plan. Ms. Hoag explained that the concern is in the impact to the neighboring property. Mr. Miller asked if there had been any discussion of a construction easement. Mr. Mack said not, and noted different methods of wall construction under consideration. He said the grading will be limited accordingly. He characterized a number of the matters raised as *construction* issues rather than planning concerns, suggesting the Commission grant an approval on those conditions. Mr. Lauter opined that the proposal is excessive for the available space, but realized the Hearing Board's decision had effectively settled that discussion. Mr. Miller deferred to the Public Works Department regarding a conditional approval. Ms. Hoag reiterated the stormwater mitigation concerns, and others regarding utility connections and required curb ramps.

Mr. Lauter moved to grant a conditional, preliminary approval, subject to revisions satisfying the latest Planning Office and Public Works Department reviews. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted 2 to 1 to conditionally approve the 'Homes at Riverside' preliminary plan, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #35-2014

Other business:

§508.3 agreement to extension-Fritz Island WWTP Facilities Upgrade Project [0:47.29]

Mr. Miller referred to an October 16th email requesting a one-month extension, and offering additional extensions if necessary. He noted the many other agencies involved where they normally aren't for most of the Commission's business. He felt the presentation at the August meeting had answered most of his questions. Ms. Hoag mentioned that the oversight of those other authorities has relieved some of the usual scrutiny from the engineering perspective. Mr. Miller gauged some recent progress, based on a couple requests for letters regarding comprehensive plan consistency.

Mr. Bealer moved to extend the review of the 'Fritz Island WWTP' plan by one month, as requested in an October 16th letter from the project manager. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve a one-month extension of the 'Fritz Island WWTP Facilities Upgrade Project' final plan.

Resolution #36-2014

review the draft September 23, 2014 meeting minutes [0:50.43]

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the September meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the September 23rd meeting minutes.

Resolution #37-2014

The Commission discussed the recent sidewalk stabilization work under the railroad crossing in the 700 block of Oley Street, and the October 18th fire at 702 North 8th Street.

Mr. Bealer summarized the Blighted Property Review Committee's October 16th certification hearings.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the October meeting. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the October 28th meeting. – 20:00p